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International Writing Program Archive of Residents' Work

Fall 10-1-2001

Writing Sample

Marius Burokas

Includes "Simpleton," "Weekend," selection from "Those From The Upper Cultural Stratum", "States Of...", "A Sacrificable Youth," and "How We Were Seen One October Morning."

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Recommended Citation

Burokas, Marius, "Writing Sample" (2001). *International Writing Program Archive of Residents' Work*. 3.
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Poems by Marius Burokas

Simpleton

I would so much like to be
a Rosicrucian, Mother
to live secretly in a cellar
in a castle accessible
to no one

I would have
lots of good intentions
a pronounceable surname
and a fiefdom of peasants
I would perform rituals
after swearing fealty by candlelight
to the Master of the Order
and in the morning
I would ascend the ramparts

the tallest tower
the North Wind
fluttering my cloak
spurs striking sparks
good
good

what can be better
when no one knows
how secret and good you are

Weekend

yeah,
they turned off the water
demolished the architecture
the defilers of greenhouses
the squeezers of berries

hands warm and sticky
and if they catch you in the park—
dance and dip
twirl and dance
hep hep

but sometimes it's a bit different
just dare to step out late
from the bar to the street—
car doors shiny and waxed
a glitter of high-heels
and you're done

only an IV
quiet mysterious
equipment--
oxygen between joints
lights
overhead life sustaining

and it beats any wish
to go for a walk

from

Those From The Upper Cultural Stratum³.

Characters with open jackets, women

who shave their heads-gaudiness,

a shooting gallery of violence.

Luxuriant flesh made up like death, and you,

rumpled private-dick with nicotine teeth.

Me-the hero of a small shop.

Me-owner of a private business.

Me-a hick with curly hair.

My apples are the cheapest.

My pistol is smoking.

I take care of old lady Friedman

so, bastards, I won't give in to you.

slowly slowly the cartridges

fall slowly slowly on his shirt

flowers of acid bloom...

O' Doctor Raymond Moody

I see the light.

God's train is coming, teaspoons clink comfortably

in the saucers of the righteous.

One cannot tell an honest face from an evil.

3.

In groups of two or three or four,
we beat up people. A torn open body
on top of white tiles. Shrunken flowers of
body orifices. Eyeglasses
sprouting in the park's grass,
in the moonlight...

O! that noise and rage. That
loud slurping, the thump,
shrieks, delicate shattering of bones.
Dancing in the dark-a complete
choreography of blows, a ballet of violence
that equals two academic hours...

Our bodies buzzing-hot and firm.
The soul sings.
The work's done,
no pearl in the shell.

States Of...

Again we are faced with violence.

Having just dialed the number
receiving you in ebony warm with breath.

Yes, I regret that I killed.

Yes, I regret that I ate and wrote.

I'm ashamed of helping anyone.

I'm folding up whistling.

I'm closing up.

Not a trace of satisfaction.

Easily I shed my body,
lacing myself into a sticky cocoon.

I grow stronger toward Autumn, toward darkness.

I fasten to a stem.

But it's only a game.

A game.

Because nothing hurts.

Nothing sentimental—

only laughter and stained-glass wings
on a sunny morning.

A Sacrificable Youth 6.

break in the image,
with your ring
cut through the air, the platform,
the melancholy fog,
scratch the cheek
of the passer-by

here he stares
clutching his face(wide-eyed),
wonders
how into this reality
from another
the ringed hand appeared;
here he is,
a humble business nightingale
with a thorn of commerce through his chest,
a ram with horns stuck
in blackthorn,
in a building-site fence,
speechless as if dumbfounded

--my innocent Apis,
I'm addressing you,
white-collared you
eating plastic-wrapped fast food,
--I, the supermarket wizard

--brute, I say
(clouds are stocked with goods,
the sun sets behind the office),
--you brute, where are you heading,
why so surprised
by this strange formation

--everything's just creases of space and time,

here here, I'll smooth them out

with my palm,

clear my throat, and nothing remains

except at the bottom right

instead of the signature,

the horn of plenty

How We Were Seen One October Morning 7.

a plump, chocolate-smeared girl
in too tight clothes
on the back seat
staring at you, at us all
through glasses, with an animal
interest;
in the cupboard of her soul-the doldrums,
not the clink of a glass
in the darkness of her brain,
not even the bark of a dog;
once back home with her parents,
who are always dead tired,
she likes
to close herself in her room,
cut thread with scissors,
snip
snip snip

*** 8.

do you remember those two islands
which you, groaning, separated
sometime after the dose of arsenic
in the burnt porridge-we do it this way
in Paris-like Madame Lafarge—
she said, wiping her hands

do you remember those two sons
whom you unshelled, separating
the eggwhites from the yellow yolks of joy
in a sterile room-behind the window,
the Bahnhof, September and rain

do you remember
the blue city on both sides of the river,
sad violinists baptized with
pomegranates, feet slashed by sunlight,
palms on the table, the laugh
of wine, together, mine, me

do you remember being covered up, wheeled, shaken,
eyes-grapes on the plate of the ceiling,
the chalked outline of the body,
darkness,
bloodblood

9.

turn me
into dice-sides alike,
fortune-telling faces,
I meekly submit my head
and everything-that's not mine
the bike, the bakery in the morning
with bodies smothered in pleasure,
curdled asphalt,
the general store
with foot-worn floor,
stag-beetle
crawling over the town bridge with dignity—
everything left at low tide:
unsure things, walnuts
of memory—
scoop out the eyes and slide the loaded dice
so I can lie to myself—
then we can face each
other over the cloth-covered table,
here while time is ours
before everyone drowns
in the roaring green